8: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1938
OQ6 Lau OQ6
Levuka



## POTMAKING CENTRES

323 463 Levuka village, Lakemba, was formerly the centre of the potmaking industry in Lau. The following account of the history of the Levuka people was obtained on Lakemba.

173 323 463 The Levuka people were originally two fisher-groups, called Ngone Ndau, who lived at Mbau. One group was called Kai Mbutoni (people of the flat) and the other was called Kai Ndelanikoro (people of the hill-village). The women of the Ngone Ndau were potters. The two groups were expelled from Mbau and the Kai Mbutoni went to Namathu on the east coast of Koro island in the Lomai Viti group, while the Kai Ndelanikoro went to Lakemba and settled on the beach at Tumbou. This group was called Kai Wai and from them the Levuka people of Lakemba have descended. Later the group moved to Kendekende, the old village site on the hill above Tumbou. At Kendekende were living the sibs of Thekena, Narewandamu, and Targalevu. The Thekena sib, consisting of Thekena, Nandomole, and Katumbalevu, claimed descent from the war hero, Ndaunisai, and ruled the island. They gave the chieftainship to Levuka because, according to the tale, the Levuka people had protected the son of a Thekena chief who went to Mbau. Later the chieftainship reverted to Thekena, and Levuka, with the help of Mbau and Nakorotumboura, the Ngone Sau people of the Ra coast (Viti Levu), attacked and defeated Thekena at Kendekende. For this reason the Levuka people are permitted to wear the turban in Mbau. After Levuka the present rulers, Katumbalevu, became chiefs and the groups moved to their present village-sites of Tumbou and Levuka.

The Levuka women continued to make pots, and the art was handed down from mother to daughter. Since the group was endogamous the art was endemic, and Levuka became the centre of pottery-making in Lau.

323 463 317 Since no Levuka potmakers are now living, the method of fabrication was obtained at Levuka from Fane Loata, an old woman whose parents were Levukans, and who had witnessed the process many times. Potter's clay was obtained from Sosoilonggi, near Levuka village. The

8: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1938
OQ6 Lau OQ6
Levuka



women dug it at a depth of about thirty centimetres from the surface of the ground. It was carried in baskets *(kato mbolambola)* by young women to the village. Black sand, used for tempering, was obtained from Vatulingilingi, Waitambu. Each potter made pots in her own home. To make a pot *(tulituli)*, clay, sand, and water were mixed thoroughly on an old mat. Then a large lump of the clay, sufficient to make the entire pot, was rolled into a ball, flattened out and the edges built up into the walls of the pot. The clay was not rolled into coils. During the process of construction the pot rested on a ring of barkcloth, called *tonggi*. The outer surface of the pot was beaten with a wooden paddle, called *kau ni tulituli*, against a stone, called *vatu ni tulituli*, held inside the pot. Paddles and stones were of various sizes. Designs were incised on the rim or the wall-surface with *sasa* (midrib of coconut-leaflet). The pots were dried in the sun for a day or two and then fired. For firing, coconut-spathes were piled up and the pots were laid on their sides on the pile and covered with more coconut-spathes. The pile was lighted and if the fire was hot, the pots became red. They were fired for about two hours and then removed with a stick inserted into the opening. While the pots were still hot, a varnish made of *makandre*-gum was rubbed on the outside surface of the *vuluvulu* (basin)-type and *ndonggo* (mangrove) was rubbed on the outside surface of the *kuro* (cooking pot)-type. The following types of earthenware vessels were made in Levuka: *kuro*, a pot used for cooking, *vuluvulu*, a basin used for hand washing and *sangga*, a jar used for drinking water (Pl. A, fig. 3).

The Levuka women manufactured pots in Levuka for trade in the southern islands. They also accompanied their men, who were professional sailors and traders, to such islands as Kambara and Oneate, where suitable clay was to be found, and made pots on the islands to supply the local demand.

On Kambara, according to old informants, they lived in the village for which they were making pots. The clay was obtained from Matanimoko at the foot of Ndelaioloi near Lomatchi village. The men dug the clay and carried it in baskets to the village where the women were working.

8: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1938
OQ6 Lau OQ6



323 463 438 The pots were made in a shed, according to the built-up, lump-technique of the Levukans. Two main types of pots were made: *ndolokoto* and *ndari*. The *ndolokoto* was a large cooking-pot, one to two metres high, and up to one and a half metres in diameter. The pot was rounded, so that it could not stand upright. It was laid on its side on two stones over the fire. The pot had two narrow mouths, one at each end. The *ndari* was a basin or bowl made in various [531] sizes and used for kava or for pudding. It was decorated with incised geometric designs around the rim. The Kambara women traded mats for Levuka pots. Occasionally the Kambara men obtained pots in Levuka.

The Kambara women were not pot-makers, but informants remember that one woman who made pots lived in Tokalau for many years. Her name was Tara Nevini from Nandurumbua sib, Nggalikarua village, Matuku. She left Kambara just before the measles epidemic in 1875.

[317] On Oneate the Levuka women made pots of red clay *(nggele ndamu)* found on the hills, mixed with black sand *(nuku loaloa)* from Sovilolo, a beach on the island. According to Tui Oneate (chief of Oneate), when the Levuka people were succeeded by Katumbalevu, they moved to Oneate, where they lived until they were recalled to Lakemba.*

Pots were imported into southern Lau from the island of Matuku. They were made in the village of Nggalikarua.

Pots from Kandavu were also traded in southern Lau. On Kambara they were exchanged for barkcloth *(ngatu)*, wooden kava-bowls *(kumete ni yanggona)*, food-bowls *(kumete ni kana manioke)*, perfumed oil *(waliwali)*, and [435] digging-sticks *(saupa)*. There was no standard of value, but the women say one large Kandavu pot was equivalent to about one wooden kava-bowl or to one sheet of barkcloth *(ngatu)* (about three by three metres) and one container *(fango)* of coconut-oil.

[439] Pots from fabrication centres in Tailevu on Viti Levu also found their way to Lau.

* For further information concerning the Levuka potters see Hocart, A.M., The Lau islands, Fiji, *Bishop Museum Bul.* 62, 1929, pp. 18-19.